

Selectmen Delay Library Transfer

By SUSANNA SHEEHAN

What was to be a routine transfer by selectmen of the Upper Alden building to the library trustees in preparation for the opening of the new library later next month turned into an upsetting discussion for both selectmen and trustees that delayed the transfer.

The problem arose when Selectmen Chairman Margaret Kearney told Alden Library Project Manager Deborah Bornheimer, Library Director Joanne LaMothe and Library Trustee Chairman Jane Bradley that she was putting a condition on the transfer of the new library building. Kearney said Town Counsel Robert Troy advised her over the phone that day to make the transfer on the condition that the selectmen retain control over how and when alcohol is used at the facility. Kearney said Troy was concerned about "safeguarding the town's assets" and wanted to require anyone interested in serving alcohol at a function at the new library to appear before selectmen, present a liability insurance certificate, and receive approval. Selectmen approve all liquor licensing in town and in public buildings.

Bornheimer and Bradley were against this condition attached to the selectmen's vote to transfer the building from their control to the library trustees'. Annual town meeting voted unanimously for this transfer in March.

"It is my opinion that this is not the appropriate forum to make a determination of that sort," Bornheimer said. "It would be a very unfortunate event even to defer the transfer one week."

Bradley said: "I have had this conversation with Mr. Troy, and he said the opposite. The transfer needs to go forward immediately...I strongly suggest you divorce the issues...Please do not hold the library hostage on this issue tonight."

The condition about alcohol surprised both Bornheimer and Bradley because, while the library's larger rooms might be used for parties where alcohol is served, that will be only a minor function of the library.

"This is not about alcohol," Bradley said.

"It is a question about what board has the ultimate control of that building," Bornheimer said.

Selectmen did not vote on the transfer at their meeting Monday night. They instead decided to contact Troy the next day, get his opinion verbally and in writing with Bornheimer and Bradley present, and post a meeting for Thursday at 7 pm to complete the transfer.

"I am not willing to take that vote right now" without following Troy's advice, Kearney said.

Selectman Friend Weiler agreed: "I think we have to get it (the condition) clarified."

"I don't think we're going to hold you up at all," said Selectman Andre Martecchini.

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The library officials want the transfer to go forward as soon as possible because the movers are coming to the new library Nov. 10. The public dedication ceremony is Nov. 23 and the library opens its doors officially on Nov. 24.

Bornheimer and Bradley were dismayed at the timing of this dispute. Both of them said they had had many conversations about the liquor liability issue with both Town Manager Rocco Longo and Troy over the past couple of years and thought the issue was settled. Both were unaware Kearney was going to place this condition on the transfer.

"I consider this vote to be perfunctory, a ceremonial event," Bornheimer said. "It would have been nice if we had heard about it before now."

"I don't see this as a big issue," Kearney said.

"It is a big issue," responded Bornheimer.

Selectmen told Bornheimer and Bradley they wanted to make the transfer, they just needed a clarification from Troy.

"I want to turn this into a celebration as much as you do," Kearney said. "I didn't come here to spoil the party. All we're interested in is protecting the town. We'll find a way to make it work."

If selectmen don't meet on Thursday, they will vote this issue at their next meeting Monday, Nov. 3.

In other business, selectmen:

- voted allow ComElectric to begin work on the underground connection between Duxbury, Marshfield and Kingston along Route 3A/Tremont St. in front of the town hall. This month special town meeting voted over

\$103,000 to make this underground electrical connection. ComElectric will begin the work after receiving permits from the state and easements from the Duxbury Rural and Historical Society, maybe in a month to 2 months.

- voted to allow a bonus shellfish season for November for both commercial and recreational harvesting of soft-shell clams. Recreational harvesters can dig on Wednesdays.